

## Willis Special Electric Construction

Oakland, CA

*A veteran electrician who got his start working for Herbie Hancock!*



In 2007, tired of working as a union electrician with large companies, Willis decided to open his own business. He wanted the freedom to take on the projects he is most passionate about: industrial and public works such as bridges and schools. He also wanted to have more control over the decisions that are made around managing project budgets. "I've seen so much waste in 34 years," he said.

### Business By The Numbers

**Loan Amount: \$5,000**  
**Industry: Construction**  
**Business Start Date: 2010**

#### Challenge

Willis needed a line of credit to support the up-front costs of larger construction projects. But, despite being a home-owner and successful business man, he was turned down by banks because he had avoided credit cards and taking on debt.

#### Opportunity

A \$5,000 loan from Opportunity Fund acted as a line of credit, allowing Willis to purchase and install costly equipment before his clients paid him for the finished job. In addition, with this loan Willis was able to begin establishing his business credit history so that he may qualify for a traditional line of credit in the future.

#### Fun Facts

Willis is a veteran electrician, having worked in the trade for nearly 40 years. He remembers one of his first projects: on stage for jazz pianist Herbie Hancock. "He was using a lot of synthesizers and microphones, so it wasn't an easy job." Willis keeps a photo of Mr. Hancock hanging in his office in Oakland.

#### Community Network

As the son of a general contractor, Willis is proud to own a professional electrician business. "There are very few 'mom-and-pop' shops left," he says, "because of the competition from larger players." As a minority-owned business and a certified Small and Local Business, Willis's shop fulfills an important niche in the Bay Area.